Jeremiah 34:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

Analysis

And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies—despite royal status and covenant lineage (Zedekiah was Davidic), the king faces identical judgment as his subjects. The Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:12-16) promised eternal dynasty, but conditioned individual kings' reigns on obedience (1 Kings 9:4-9). Zedekiah violated covenant by initiating then breaking the slave release agreement; his leadership position increases rather than mitigates guilt. To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).

The king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you—God's judgment includes bitter irony. Babylon temporarily withdrew when Egypt threatened their siege (37:5-11); Zedekiah and the people interpreted this as divine deliverance answering their covenant-making. Instead, God declares: that army you thought gone will return. The withdrawal was test, not rescue; they failed by immediately re-enslaving freed servants. God's judgments often include allowing us to reap precisely what we sowed—Zedekiah sought political deliverance without heart repentance, so God gave him political destruction.

2 Kings 25:6-7 records the prophecy's fulfillment: Zedekiah fled Jerusalem, was captured near Jericho, witnessed his sons' execution, then had his eyes gouged out —the last sight he saw was his dynasty's end. He died in Babylonian prison (52:11), fulfilling also Ezekiel's prophecy that he would "come to Babylon" but "not see it"

(Ezekiel 12:13). When human kingdoms reject God's covenant, they discover He remains sovereign over all earthly power—Babylon was merely His instrument (27:6).

Historical Context

Zedekiah (597-586 BCE) was Babylon's puppet king, installed after Jehoiachin's deportation. He foolishly rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, trusting Egyptian promises. When Egypt briefly engaged Babylon (588 BCE), Zedekiah interpreted this as vindication. Jeremiah repeatedly warned this was false hope (34:21-22; 37:6-10). After the Babylonians returned, they systematically destroyed every fortified Judean city, then Jerusalem itself. Archaeological evidence from Lachish, Azekah, and other sites confirms this campaign's thoroughness—Judah was utterly devastated.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Zedekiah's story warn against mistaking temporary relief from consequences as divine approval of ongoing sin?
2. In what ways might religious or political leadership actually increase covenant accountability rather than provide exemption?
3. Why is seeking God's blessing (deliverance from enemies) while rejecting God's commands ultimately futile?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת | הוּ | צִדְקִיָ֣ | מֶ לֶךְ | יְהוּדָ ה | וְאֵת | שָׂ ריו | אֶתֵּן

H853 | | **And Zedekiah** H6667 | **king** H4428 | **of Judah** H3063 | H853 | **and his princes** H8269 | **will I give** H5414

וּבְיַד | אֹיְבֵיהֶ ם | וּבְיַד | מְבַקְשֵׁ י | נַפְשָׁ ם
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and into the hand H3027 | **of their enemies** H341 | **and into the hand** H3027 | **of them that seek** H1245 | **their life** H5315

וּבְיַד | חֵ יל | מֶ לֶךְ | בָּבֶ ל | הָעֹל ים | מֵעֲלֵיכֶם:
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and into the hand H3027 | **army** H2428 | **king** H4428 | **of Babylon's** H894 | **which are gone up** H5927 | H5921

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 39:6 (Kingdom): Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

Jeremiah 52:10 (Kingdom): And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

Ezekiel 17:16 (Kingdom): As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.